

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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WASHINGTON—U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) issued the following statement today regarding the tragic death of the President of Poland, Lech Kaczynski:

"I am deeply saddened by the news of the tragic plane crash in Russia that took the life of President Lech Kaczynski, his wife Maria, and a delegation of senior Polish officials. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, the people of Poland, as well as the Polish-American community in the 10th district and across the country.

"President Kaczynski will be remembered as a courageous leader, an icon for Poland's struggle for freedom, and a great friend of the United States. During his tenure as President, Lech Kaczynski's steadfast commitment to the US-Polish partnership, including Poland's contribution to the war in Afghanistan and cooperation on missile defense, greatly strengthened the bonds of friendship between our nations.

"As part of Solidarity movement and later as leader of a free Poland, it was Lech Kaczynski that led the way to Poland's liberation from communism and onto the vibrant democracy we see today. It is thus doubly tragic that on this dark day, President Kaczynski traveled to Russia to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre, one of the greatest crimes of totalitarianism against the Polish nation.

"I wish the Polish nation courage and strength in overcoming this terrible tragedy."

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